

GREEK AND ROMAN MYTH.

MR. LANG'S REVIEW OF THE HOMERIC QUESTION.

HOMER AND THE EPIC. By Andrew Lang. Pp. xi-424. Longmans, Green & Co.

THE ILIADS OF HOMER. PRINCE OF POETS. Done into English by George Chapman. Three Volumes. Pp. viii, 339; viii, 332; viii, 319. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THE GODS OF OLYMPUS; OR, MYTHOLOGY OF THE GREEKS AND ROMANS. Translated and adapted from the well-known edition of H. Pétusac.

By Katherine A. Raleigh. With a Preface by Jane E. Harrison. Pp. xv, 271. Cassell Publ. Company.

Mr. Lang's new book has the air of an exercise in literary gymnastics. It shows how the author can keep in motion, like a series of gilt balls in the hands of a juggler, the ideas advanced by German and English critics, tossing them up in endless succession and receiving them in the same hand as they fall. The cause of Mr. Lang's dexterity, his one argument, is the infallibility of the cultivated literary taste; it is an argument which is as unconvincing as it is irrefutable. Mr. Lang appeals to the poets as against the professors, and though such an appeal is a legitimate device of literary partisanship, it only shows that the question in its present aspect is insoluble. But Mr. Lang himself, speaking as it were for the poets, is an index of the progress that has been made toward a statement of the case such as may be satisfactory to both poets and professors. Time was when the absolute individuality of works of genius was insisted on. They sprang full panoplied like Athene from the brain of Zeus. Perhaps now no one conceives such literary miracles possible. The work of genius, like the worker of genius, is a growth. One hand shapes the poem, but many minds and many hands, the minds and hands of a whole race, may, of many races, of a long civilization or of mingled civilizations, have contributed to the ideals embodied in it. The result is beautiful but inexplicable. The professors have better reason than Mr. Lang will allow for dwelling on the inexplicable. It is only thus that the poets have been taught some secrets of their own art which they never could have found out for themselves. The main difference between the poets and the professors now is upon the point where the great, shaping genius shall be placed in the history, more or less hypothetical, of the Homeric epic. If he is introduced early, then much work as good as the best in the poems may have been by other hands. But if he is introduced late, then he has absorbed for ages a credit for profound originality which he did not deserve. Whenever born of this dilemma he is taken, one thing is certain—the world can never get back to that unsophisticated state, that attitude of gaping wonderment which it once affected in the presence of genius. So much Walt did for mankind.

In contrasting the Homeric epics with the Nibelungenlied, the Song of Roland and the Kalevala, Mr. Lang really demonstrates that the superiority of the former was in a matter concerning not so much the individual as the race—that is, form.

SYMMETRY is conceded on all hands to the Greek artistic instinct, while it is never looked for among those races which have not received special Greek training. The disorder of a Northern epic is, so far as Mr. Lang's argument goes, no more a proof of the Greek need for a Homer than the existence of a Colossus on the Nile is a proof that an Egyptian sculptor could have moulded an Apollo. If Mr. Lang has gone further and shown how the Greek sense of symmetry must have culminated in some individual poet, then his argument might have had a scientific value. In the review of the Kalevala, he, and apparently the authorities upon whom he depends, stop short of the very point upon which the whole argument turns. The supporters of that was the Homeric epic were the result of a fusing together of separate lays. "I will show you approximately how it may have been done," said a certain Finnish scholar, "for we have an epic in just the disjointed state required by Wolf's theory. I will put it together." And he did. Now it is easy to say that Louarn's work does not compare with Homer, and that not a learned redaction but a natural development is now demanded in the history of an epic. The answer is that the process of making an epic out of the lays is still going on in Finland, and that the phenomena are such as were hypothetically required in Homer's case. Dr. Krohn, of Viborg, a competent witness, denied that the natural fusion, though it often corresponded to Louarn's arrangement, was inspired by the latter, since the chaps were wholly ignorant of reading and writing.

Some of Mr. Lang's allusions may puzzle the German Homericists. What they will make out of the remark that the meeting between Achilles and Agamemnon in the twentieth book of the Iliad resembled that between Tom Sawyer and the strange boy remains to be seen.

A charming addition to the "Knickerbocker Nugget" series is a reprint in three volumes of Chapman's translation of the Iliad, with the author's preface and concluding note to the reader.

The mere lapse of time has given to Chapman what his original had in the minds of Greeks of the polished period—a flavor of antiquity which cannot be counterfeited. The book is illustrated in a way not only to show the archaeological notices of Chapman's time, but also those of the present day as derived from vase and the like.

The effect is a trifle confusing, as when Agamemnon has a gray beard and the look of a Roman Senator in his quarrel with Achilles, and a dark beard when he comes to lead away Briseis.

Perhaps it is an indication of returning conservatism generally that a writer so positive in theory as Jane E. Harrison should particularly commend a work on Greek mythology from which hypothesis has been richly excluded. Nevertheless, in her introduction to Katherine A. Raleigh's translation of the German treatise on Greek and Roman gods by A. H. Pétusac, she shows a readiness to leap from the frying-pan into the fire, from the study of Sanscrit derivations to the still more fanciful interpretations of modern savagery which folklore and evolutionary theories have made fashionable. Derivation in the order of time was at least rational; but the new plan of working the process backward, from the modern savagery to the ancient Greek, never looked less promising than it does now. The volume which Miss Harrison introduces reflects none of the "new lights"; what hypothesis it contained, being old, has been omitted, and the student is made acquainted with classical mythology in its perfection. References at the beginning of each chapter enable him to search out certain other lines of investigation, though the preponderance of the forest and field cult in the list of works will need to be corrected by an impartial teacher. The illustrations of the book are numerous, handsome and useful.

THE MAJESTIC MAKES A QUICK TRIP.

The Majestic, which arrived yesterday, made a quick run from Liverpool. She made the trip in five days twenty-three hours and seventeen minutes. Among her passengers were W. Canfield Brooks, bart.; Don J. Partridge, S. W. Flawson and Lady Flawson, Wirt D. Walker, A. F. Walcott, president of the Monmouth Park Racing Association, and Mrs. Walcott, Waller H. Harris and James Dredge, who have come from England on business connected with the World's Fair.

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A LAWYER CHARGED WITH LARCENY.

THE COMPLAINT DISMISSED UPON THE PRESENTATION OF A CERTIFIED CHECK.

De Witt C. Hayes, a lawyer, with an office at No. 311 Broadway, living at No. 60 West Ninety-ninth st., was arrested Tuesday by Detective Sergt. Jacob and Danis on a warrant charging him with the larceny of \$5,000. The warrant was issued by Justice Grady on the complaint of Miss Josephine Magruder, of No. 340 West Thirty-sixth-st., who alleged that Hayes had secured the money from her under false representations.

About three months ago Miss Magruder inherited \$5,000 from her father. She called on Mr. Hayes at his office, and informed him that she wanted to invest \$5,000 on good security. On April 3, it is alleged, Hayes sent for Miss Magruder and told her a client, Thomas Moore, whom he borrowed \$5,000 on a flat house at No. 60 West Ninety-ninth.

Miss Magruder loaned the money, and received in return a first mortgage on that property. She very recently learned, it is alleged, that the house No. 60 West Ninety-ninth, was owned by a shoe dealer, Frederick von de Heide, of No. 373 Greenwich-st., and that Moore never owned the property.

Hayes was arraigned before Justice Grady in Jefferson Market Court yesterday. Miss Magruder told the justice that she did not desire to press the complaint against Hayes, as he had given her a certified check for \$5,000. The case was dismissed. Hayes said that the case was the result of a misunderstanding.

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